A SERMON

Preached in the

Parish CHURCH

OF

HACKNEY;

ON

The fifth of *JULY*, 1685.

Being the day before the Battle and Victory over the *REBELS* in the *WEST.*

By Thomas Aston, A. M.

Psalm. 85. 10. *Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*

LONDON

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TO
COLLONEL
John Friend,

SIR,

YOu have ſhew'd me ſo many Favors, that I am neither able to requite, nor to number them. Yet I have a further requeſt, being [in a nature] compell'd to publiſh

a Sermon; I humbly presume to lay it at your Feet, and beg your Patronage.

Worthy SIR,

your most obliged

Affectionate Minister

Thomas Aston.

A

SERMON

Preached to the

Loving Society, &c.

Iſaiah, 57, 21.

There is no Peace ſaith my God, to the Wicked.

SO ill ſounding an accent, is the Alarum of War, that it makes thoſe that hear it to tremble: ſo ſweet is the meſſage of Peace, that it is as a Cordial to the Heart. The proclaimer of War is terrible, but *how beautiful upon the Moun-* Iſaiah. 52.

tains are the Feet of thoſe that bring Tydings of Peace? they have both the ſame Maſter, the ſame Prophet proclaims theſe different tenours, from the ſame Authority. This Herald was ſent to *Jeruſalem*: to *tell her that her Warfair was ended*: Then he brought an *Olive* Branch of Peace; here he proclaims War and both ſealed with the Kings Signet. Comfort ye my People *ſaith your God*, there is no Peace *ſaith my God* to the Wicked.

Iſaiah. 40. 2.

Iſaiah. 40. 1.

Wherein obſerve 1ſt. the Thing proclaimed, 2dly. the Perſon proclaiming and 3dly. the Parties againſt whom. The Proclamation is War, negatively ſet down, *there is no Peace*, which is more binding than a poſitive Aſſertion. The Herald or Party Proclaiming; is no leſs then a Prophet but

but not from himſelf, but from the King of Kings, which has an indiſputable Power to grant a Commiſſion, being God; to whom he expreſſeth his Relation my God. The Parties againſt whom, *viz.* Wicked. Tho' God is a God of Peace, yet he hath Enemies againſt whom he doth wage War from generation to generation. *There is no Peace to the Wicked.*

Firſt of the Proclamation, *There is no Peace.* I ſhall not lead you into a common place, to ſhew the ſweet Fruits of Peace, and the bitter Effects and lamentable Calamities of War; I may ſay of it with wiſe King *Solomon*, *He that encreaſeth Knowledge, encreaſeth Sorrow.* Eccleſ. 1. 18.

I ſhall

I ſhall conjoyn the War and the Enemy, the **Wicked** and **no Peace**, Oh heavy Doom! aggravated by the generality of the Perſons and the univerſality of time and place: no wicked Man at any time, in any place can be exempted. The propoſition will bear this, being an univerſal Negative.

A wicked Man hath neither Peace of Grace here, nor Peace of Glory hereafter, but as he paſſeth from ſin to ſin, from one wickedneſs to another; ſo he paſſeth from one puniſhment to another, from one War to another, from one Hell to another, from Flaſhes into Flames from the inward Torment of the Fiend of Conſcience, to the eternal Torments of the Devil and his Angels. Thus

Thus you ſee *there is no Peace to the Wicked*, at any time, nor in any place, nor [indeed] with any Perſon. 1ſt. not with God 2ly. not with Man, and 3dly. not with themſelves. Upon theſe three I ſhall ground my preſent Diſcourſe.

Firſt, the Wicked have **no Peace with God**. The Scripture tells us plainly they *Enemies to God*, Pſalm. 21. 8. *Sons of Wrath, ſet on fire of Hell.* Eph. 2. 3. St. Jam. 3. 6. *Aliens from the Common-Wealth of* Iſrael, Eph, 2. 12. *and Strangers from the Covenant of Grace.* Being ſuch they are without Chriſt, and conſequently without peace, for *he is our Peace.* He 14. is our Peace-maker. *When we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son.* Rom. 5. 10. *In him God is well pleaſed,* St. Luke 3 22. and for him he is well pleaſed with us. Without Chriſt we

 are

are Enemies; through him we are Friends of, and United to God.

The Apoſtle affirms, that ſome Men have not Faith. 2. *Theſſa.* 3. 1. 2. *Pray for us*, &c. *That we may be delivered from unreaſonable and Wicked Men: for all Men have not Faith. Heb.* 11. 6. *Without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.* And this great King will not be at Peace with thoſe that diſpleaſe him. Without Faith no juſtification, and we muſt be juſtified before we can have peace with God. So long then as men continue in their unbelief, they can have no Peace.

1. Sam. 15. 23. *Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft* and Witchcraft is a kind of dethroning God Almighty, and [as far as the Creature is able] a ſetting

ting the Devil in his place. This hainous Sin we are guilty of, if we rebel, and we do rebel if we diſobey Gods Commandments: and this is one of his Statutes; *Touch not mine anointed.* Pſalm. 105. 15. This is one Commandment, *Let every Soul be ſubject unto the higher Powers.* Rom. 13. 1. This is one Precept, Pray *for Kings and for all that are in Authority.* 1. Tim. 2. 2. This is one Commandment, *Submit your ſelves to every Ordinance of Man, for the Lords ſake, whether it be unto the King as Supream, or unto Governours as unto them that are ſent by him.* 1. St Peter. 2. 13. 14. He then that draws his Sword, or lifts up his Hand againſt his lawful Soveraign, the Lords anointed, is not only an Enemy, a Traytor, a Rebel to the King, but alſo to the King of Kings, he proclaims open War againſt him, he ſhall have *no Peace.*

And he doth not only proclaim, but hath joyned Battle, and fought with the Wicked from Heaven, on Earth, and ſummon'd Powers from under the Earth.

Firſt from Heaven. There is mention made of three Heavens, and from all he has oppoſed the Wicked. From the higheſt Heaven by his Angels; An Angel was ſent to deſtroy the *Aſſyrians*; an Angel was ſent to be the Death of *Herod*. By his Saints for tho' they know not the deſires of Men in particular, yet they pray in general, that God may be avenged of ſuch as moleſt his Church. Rev. 6. 10. *Crying with a loud Voice, ſaying how long O Lord, Holy and True, doſt thou not judge, and avenge our Blood on them that dwell on the Earth.*

2. Kings. 10 35.

Act. 12 23.

He

He has fought with them from the ſecond Story, *The Stars in their Courſes fought againſt* Siſera. *The Sun ſtood ſtill, and haſted not to go down about a whole day, and the Moon ſtayed until the People had avenged themſelves upon their Enemies. For the Lord hearken'd unto the Voice of a Man; and fought for* Iſrael. Judges. 5. 20. Joſhua. 10. v. 13.

From the loweſt Heaven. *He bringeth the Winds aud Storms out of his Treaſure, and perſecuteth the Wicked with his Tempeſt. Hailſtones from Heaven were ſhowred down, to ſlay the wicked* Amorites. Pſalm. 11. 6. *upon the Ungodly he ſhall rain ſnares, fire and Brimſtone, Storm and Tempeſt: this ſhall be their Portion to drink.*

Secondly,

Secondly, He hath fought with them on earth. The earth opened and ſwallowed the Rebellious *Chorites.* The Sea drowned the *Ægyptians.*

Thirdly, He hath brought Forces from beneath to War againſt them. *An evil Spirit from the Lord vexed* Saul. And we read in the Goſpel, of foul Spirits that haunted many, made ſome deaf, ſome dumb, drove ſome into the Water, ſome into the Fire. All which as actions proceed from God; for *there is no Power but of God.* The Devil cannot ſtir but when and ſo far as God pleaſeth.

Rom. 13. 1.

God Almighties hand is not ſhorten'd; what he hath done, we may certainly expect he will do. He will

will vex, overthrow the wicked, they ſhall have *no Peace.*

Secondly, The Wicked have **no Peace with Men.** *Solomon* tells us, *there is a time for War, and a time of Peace*: But the time of Peace, the Wicked cannot be ſaid to enjoy; for when they ſing Peace, Peace, then Deſtruction is hard at hand, Like Oxen they are pampered and fed, but it is but for the Slaughter; But generally, *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt; whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt.* verſe. 20. They are turbulent in their own Nature, and inſtead of Peace on Earth, they ſend a Sword, and are Seminaries of Diſcord.

But there is little need to trouble my ſelf, or you, to prove that the Wicked have no outward Peace with Men;

Men ; ſince both Nature, and the Holy Scripture gives us So convincing a reaſon, which is this : Righteouſneſs is the elder Siſter to Peace.

Ariſtotle in his Æthicks tells us, that Agreement in Evil, is not Amity, but Conſpiracy. *The Tabernacles of the* Edomites *and* Iſhmalites, *the* Moabites *and* Hagarens may caſt their Heads together with one conſent, and be confederate. *Herod* and *Pilate* may agree againſt Chriſt. All the Diſſenters [tho' they differ among themſelves] agree in their Oppoſition to the Church : but this agreement does not not proceed from a Principle of Love, 'tis only the product of a joynt hatred in them towards others, and doth not deſerve the Name of Peace, 'tis meer Confederacy.

The

The Royal Prophet, who ſpake part of the lively Oracles of God, clears this Point. *Pſalm.* 85. 10. *Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other*: For that Man can never be a true Friend to any, that is not a Friend to Truth it ſelf; he can never be Faithful to any that confide in him, that is perfidious to his God. *What Peace* [*ſaid* Jehu *to* Jehoram] *ſo long as the Whoredoms* 2. King 9. 22. *of thy Mother* Jezebel *and her Witchcrafts are ſo many?* And how can we expect Peace on Earth, and good Will among Men: ſo long as Whoredom, Drunkenneſs, raſh, and falſe Swearing, Lying, Deceit, Rebellion, & Treaſon are ſo frequent among us? Peace is as inconſiſtent with Wickedneſs, as Light with Darkneſs. St. *James*, 4. 1. asketh the queſtion *From whence come Wars, and fight-*

ings among you? come they not hence, even of your luſts? This is the reaſon; becauſe Men keep not the unity of the Faith, they have broken the Bond of Peace. We put up our Petitions for Peace, and may the Prince of Peace accept our Devotion. But we cannot pray for it, but with St. *Pauls* limitation; *if it be poſſible*, and 'tis impoſſible to be at Peace with Sciſmaticks and Phanaticks, ſince they are profeſſed Enemies both to Truth and Peace: *When we ſpeak of Peace* [ſaith King *David*] *they make ready for Battle.*

But [my Friends] I can ſhew you the good and right way, to make even your Enemies to be at Peace with you; *Viz. When a Mans Ways pleaſe God*: this great King will be his *Advocate* to thoſe that *plead with him, and fight againſt thoſe that fight againſt him.* Now

Now I come to the 3d. Poſition; *viz.* that the Wicked have *neither Peace one with another, nor in their own Conſciences.*

Firſt they have very ſeldom *Agreement* among themſelves. *I will* (*ſaith God*) *ſet* Ægyptians *againſt* Ægyptians, *and they ſhall fight every one againſt his Brother, and every one againſt his* Neighbour, *Kingdom againſt Kingdom, and City againſt City,* Ephraim *againſt* Manaſſeh, *and* Manaſſeh *againſt* Ephraim, *the* Sadduces *againſt the* Phariſees, *and the* Phariſees *againſt the* Sadduces, *and a Mans Foes may be thoſe of his own Houſehold.*

Do ſo, Oh Lord, to our Enemies, divide them, let every Mans Sword be againſt his Fellow, but let us ever eſcape them.

Secondly, they have **no Peace in their own Conſcience s**. I have ſhewed you already, that they have no Peace with God; and Peace of Conſcience ariſeth from Peace with him. The Conſcience is never at Peace until ſin be pardoned, and being without Chriſt, their ſin remaineth: and their Conſcience will one day be a thouſand Witneſſes to accuſe them.

This Evil Conſcience may be conſidered two ways, either too quiet, or too unquiet; both directly oppoſite to a peaceable Conſcience.

Firſt, Conſcience may be **too quiet**; This [you'l ſay] is a Paradox. A Conſcience quiet and not peaceable! This overquiet Conſcience is, when a man

Man *ſeared* as *with a hot Iron* is paſt feeling, *viz.* when the cuſtom, and habit of Sin hath taken away the ſence of it. When a Man is given up to *a reprobate mind to work all uncleaneſs with greedineſs*, when neither threatnings can terrifie, judgments move, nor promiſes allure him; then Conſcience is too quiet. That Army muſt needs be ſurprized, where there is no Watches, no Alarums to give Warning. When the Pulſe beats not, the Party is near his Death. He that is ignorant of his Sickneſs, will never apply himſelf to a Phyſitian. He's moſt deſperately ſick, who feels not his Diſtemper. So if Conſcience do not do its Office to accuſe and excuſe, 'tis dangerouſly ill. There is the greateſt danger in ſuch a calm, or rather inſenſibility of Conſcience; nay, ſuch a Numneſs, or Lethargy is the 1. Tim. 4. 2.

the greateſt puniſhment. The Lord threatned the *Iſraelites*, that he would *ſmite them with Blindneſs, and Aſtoniſhment of Heart*: meaning, that he would inflict upon them ſuch an inſenſible dulneſs, that in doing Evil, they ſhould be without apprehenſion of the Evil; and ſuch a heavy Judgment fell upon them; for when they were preſſed by *Pilate* to releaſe Chriſt, they in their implacable Fury neither knowing what they did, nor ſaid, horribly curs'd themſelves, crying out, *his Blood be on us and on our Children.* And God Almighty is juſt and true in his dealing with them; for ever ſince to this day they have been Vagabonds, and have no City to dwell in, and are hatred of God, and Man.

Deu. 28. 28.

Thus

Thus you ſee what a ſore Judgment ſtupidity of Conſcience is. Such are naked, and not aſhamed: they drink deadly Poiſon, and cannot perceive it: their Wounds are ſo deep, that they had rather they ſhould feſter, than be ſearched. They will not War againſt ſin, but are at peace with Hell.

Conſcience is privy to all our good and evil actions; and doth either vindicate, or condemn us. It is a practical Syllogiſm in our underſtanding; the Major whereof is Gods Law, the Minor is our application of that Law to our ſelves, approving in our Actions what is good, and diſliking what is evil. As Gods Secretary, it Records all our Actions, and Thoughts, and Words in a Book of remembrance; and if it be not

not called to give Teſtimony here, it will be called at the general Audit to make anſwer for whatſoever has been *done in the body, whether it be good, or bad.*

2 Cor. 5. 10.

Men are now ſo carried away with the Delights of this Life, that they have no leaſure to take notice of the checks of Conſcience: but in the day of Judgment they ſhall be brought to light, and every Mans Conſcience will acknowledge the Juſtice of the Sentence of the Righteous Judge. Conſcience is now a ſecret Witneſs, only known to the Perſon whoſe it is; but then all ſhall be made manifeſt, and apparent to all.

But this Conſcience will appear a greater Enemy, if we conſider the next degree, which is a **too diſquiet Con-**

Conſcience. This is fain'd by the Poet to be one of the three Furies of Hell. For tho' a Man uſe all means imaginable; Wine, Muſick, Society to quiet it, when it is once awaked out of that paſt feeling, and deluding Dream, he endures a Hell upon Earth. This moved *Solomon* to ask the Queſtion. *A Wounded Spirit who can bear?* Then no Wiſdom can counſel him, no Eloquence perſwade him; then no Phyſick can cure, nor Riches ranſom him from this tormenting Fiend. And it is ſuch a Tormentor, as the Wretch always carries about him; he continually feels thoſe inward Flaſhes, and Flames: he can find no comfort abroad, nor pleaſe himſelf at home; but in all places, and at all times helliſh Haggs, and infernal Furies affright him. A Man may Prov. 18. 14.

fly from, and escape an outward Enemie, but he cannot fly from himself. The Murderer of *Symmacus*, [being at Supper] thought he saw his Visage in the head of a Fish, served up to the Table. And it is reported of *Richard* the third, that [as a Judgment for his bloody Act upon his two Nephews] he dreamed the Devil did haul and pull him in most hideous and ugly shapes. *Cain* and *Judas* were dogg'd at their heels by their tormenting Consciences: the death of the former is not so notorious; but you know how the other was brought to his dismal end. His Conscience was a Bayliff to arrest, a Justice to commit him, a Jaylor to imprison, and a Witness to accuse him, a Jury to find him guilty, and a Judge to condemn him, a Sheriff to convey him to the Place of Execution

Prince *Edward* and *Richard* D. of *York* in the *Tower*.

cution, and a Hangman to end one Misery, and begin a greater.

'Tis true a **Tender Conscience**, is a blessing, it *worketh Repentance never to be repented of*; it prevents sin, and makes a Man circumspect in his Ways. It was happy for King *David*, that his Conscience check'd him for his Adultery, and Murther, and numbring the People; this wrought in him a Godly Sorrow, expressed by his penitential and hearty Prayers. It was happy for the *Apostle Peter*, that his Conscience check'd him for denying his good Lord and Master; he wept bitterly, discovered his own weakness, and became a stronger Pillar in the Church of God. But there may be a tender Conscience in Masquerade, I do not need to take up much time to distinguish. 2. Cor. 7. 10.

'Tis very apparent, ſome preſume upon a tender Conſcience when really they have none. By their Fruits you may know them. When you ſee a Man ſcrupulous at an innocent Ceremony, bowing at the name of *Jeſus*, kneeling at the Sacrament, *&c.* and yet make no Conſcience to lye, to deceive, to ſpeak evil of Dignities, to be drunk, to commit uncleanneſs: you may well conclude that Mans ſcrupulocity proceeds not from Conſcience [properly ſo called] but from erronious Fancy; and this is that our pretended conſciencious Schiſmaticks, [who diſturb the Peace of our Church] are poſſeſſed off. Indeed he is not a good Chriſtian who is not conſcious of his Failings, and Aberrations, and doth not earneſtly beſeech a Pardon for Chriſts ſake, with ſtrong cryes, prayers,

ers, and Tears, wherewith God is well pleaſed to be importun'd. But a Man may as eaſily ſee the difference between theſe two, as between a real Monarch and a perſonated King, on a Stage: The one cryes out againſt *Sin*; the other againſt *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*, nicknaming *Decency* and *Order*. The counterfeit Conſcience is hateful to the true God, the unfeigned is his Delight; and the gracious Redeemer of mankind will wipe away all Tears from ſuch: they ſhall ſee their Obligation cancell'd, their Debt paid; for *the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth them from all Sin*. But the Wicked are condemned by their Conſcience. Their ſecret Faults, [whereof they would take no Cognizance, when it might be advantagious to them,] their lying in wait for Blood, their private lurking

in

in thievish Corners, their secret slanders, their Covetousness, their Rebellion, covered over with a superficial Holiness; all these, and whatsoever else they are guilty of, are well known to Conscience; and it will accuse, and condemn them.

Thus I have briefly shew'd, that the wicked have no Peace with God nor with Men, nor among themselves, nor in their own Consciences. For tho' for a time, they may seem quiet, they are not peaceable, 'tis only from carnal security. I shall now descend to some practical Conclusions.

First we may conclude, that **Sin in the Habit without Remorse**; [which amounts to Wickedness] **inevitably brings Misery.** *no Peace*! consequently War, ruine *to the Wicked.* Yet *because Sentence against an Evil Work is not*

not executed ſpeedily; therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully ſet in them to do evil. But it ſhall not be well with the Wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his days. The wicked Man [becauſe he is not preſently ſtruck with a Thunderbolt] Fancies that God takes no notice of his actions, and will not puniſh him for them; *theſe things haſt thou done and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf, but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in Order before thine Eyes.* Now conſider this yee that forget God, yee that approve, and careſs your ſelves in any known ſin, whether concupiſcence, drunkenneſs, raſh ſwearing, diſobedience to Governours, or deceit and fraud. Conſider this yee that *ſpeak of good evil and of evil good*, that give baſe Schiſm,

Eccleſ. 8. 11.

v. 13.

Pſalm. 50. 21.

Schiſm, and ungodly Rebellion, the glorious Title of Religion; and the true Worſhip, and Service of God, the ignominious name of Superſtition: yee *put Light for Darkneſs, and Darkneſs for Light.* Yee can have no Peace; God will War againſt you, he will break you in pieces while there is none to help. Man will War againſt you; like *Iſhmael* your *hand will be againſt every Man, and every Mans Hand againſt* you. Your own Conſcience will War againſt you, proſecute and condemn you. You ſhall have no *Peace.* Conſider how fearful a thing it is, to be at variance with all theſe, and therefore labour to be at Peace with God, and then what Man? what Angel? what Devil can be againſt you? If as yet you apprehend him your adverſary, *agree with him quickly; ſeek him early*

early whilſt he may be found, call upon him, while he is near; 'tis not yet too late: beſeech him to forgive you your unrighteouſneſs, and to cocover all your Sin, and to be at peace with you through the interceſſion of your bleſſed Mediator; ſo ſhall you not only enjoy the unſpeakable Bleſſing, *The Peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding*. But Peace with Men. Not only with good Men, who are not apt to be at variance; but even with your Enemies, and Peace in your own Conſciences, which is a continual Feaſt. But if you fight againſt God, by an unchaſt Converſation, and wicked Life, then the Lord will fight againſt you even with the Rod of the ungodly; thoſe that are as wicked, or more wicked than your ſelves, ſhall be

your Scourges. For we may be well assured that if the Wise Disposer of all Things, should give the Rebel Enemies the Victory, [which God in mercy forbid, I hope there is no danger of them.] it is not for any love to them, but partly for the Chastisement, and so for the amendment of Gods erring and straying Servants; and partly, that the Wicked being promoted, may have the greater Downfal.

Secondly, We may conclude that, **The only way to obtain Peace, is to do Righteousness.** Men generally regard their own advantage, what more forceable inducement to perswade Men to be just, good, meek, religious than this? This great

great bleſſing *Peace*, is the portion, the inheritance of the Righteous; wherefore the wicked intermeddle not in it. *Peace* is Gods Creature. *I create the fruits of the Lips, Peace, Peace.* As in this *Chap.* he can convert curſing Traytors and Rebells: and make cruel *Eſau* diſſolve into Tears in his Brothers Boſom, whom he had vowed to kill. In a word, the only way to wound our Enemies is to mortifie our ſelves; ſo ſhall Sinners be converted unto us: ſo ſhall God even our God, give us his Bleſſing: the Bleſſing of all poſſible Peace; the Bleſſing of Plenty all good things *ſhall be miniſtred unto us* in this Life, and after this Warfair is ended, he who is the *Prince of Peace* will Crown us with Victory.

F I N I S.